



# Subject Benchmark Statement: Forensic Science

## The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Forensic Science. It is specifically designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the main Statement for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



## Why study a degree in Forensic Science?

Forensic science is the application of science to serve the purposes of the law. As a subject discipline, forensic science provides a broadly-based science degree with a strong vocational focus on roles where scientific knowledge and skills are used to support and underpin both investigation and the justice system. This helps to ensure that forensic testimony presented to the court is underpinned by sound, peer-reviewed science.

Most Forensic Science courses feature a broad, laboratory-based analytical science curriculum incorporating aspects of related disciplines, such as anthropology or archaeology. Alternative courses may be strongly focused on digital forensics or investigation while retaining much of the core knowledge and skills associated with the forensic process.



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in forensic science?

Teaching and learning styles include lectures, practical classes, mock crime scenes and courtrooms, and work-based learning. Practical classes, for example in laboratories, computer rooms and/or outdoors, should allow the student to acquire a variety of transferable skills, and become familiar with forensic experimental methods and their scientific basis. There is likely to be an emphasis on data handling, statistics, and contemporaneous preparation of records and reports. Sessions should be student-centred and use active learning strategies to promote inclusivity, application and engagement.



## How are students assessed?

The assessment of Forensic Science courses includes a diverse mix of methods that provide opportunities for students to develop a broad and contemporary skillset for a range of careers. Assessments may be a combination of formative and summative to enhance students' skills and gain confidence, and may be delivered in person and/or online.

Approaches can include problem-solving, oral presentations, laboratory reports and examinations. Care is taken that they are accessible to all students.

Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, reasonable adjustments to those assessments are considered while ensuring fairness across the full cohort.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Forensic Science are outlined on **pages 21 to 26**, with postgraduate degrees on **page 27** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards - the Statement also sets out typical and excellent standards for honours degrees.

Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours: 1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd. Study at master's level requires higher level skills, with students expected to achieve according to the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS.

The Statement was developed by a group of subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 30** of the Statement.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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